

# Political Science:

## THE STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE

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## *American Political Science: The Discipline's State and the State of the Discipline<sup>1</sup>*

*Political Science as a debate might be political science at its best.*  
(Lindblom 1997, 262)

### ■ | Political Science as a Discipline

*State of the discipline* implies a discipline, yet even this much about political science cannot be taken for granted. As an organized profession, political science has existed for nearly a century. However, it has been a capacious, often cacophonous, undertaking. Political scientists possess sharply divergent views about their research and pedagogy. They disagree not only about what they should study and what constitutes a persuasive argument and evidence but also about how to understand the discipline's past. By the second page of his recent history, Gabriel Almond felt compelled to note that there exist many competing alternatives to his preferred progressive-eclectic approach (Almond 1996; also see Almond 1990). Further, political scientists often lack confidence in their enterprise. Charles Lindblom's iconoclastic assessment of the discipline records its meager contributions, amateur selection of research questions, obsession with method rather than substance, and absence both of social criticism and scientific authority (Lindblom 1990, 1997). Is there a discipline at all, we might wonder, before moving on to chronicle its condition?

Readers of this volume will not miss the remarkable heterogeneity and contested qualities of political science. We choose to put them to the side, not because we are disengaged or lack particular preferences about these

1. We have benefited from comments on our first draft by Robert Dahl and Sidney Verba at the American Political Science Association 2000 Annual Meeting, by Gregory Caldeira, Jeffrey Frieden, David Laitin, Paul Pierson, and Barry Weingast, who offered formal critiques at two meetings to discuss the volume in Washington, DC, in December 2000, and by most colleagues in this book.

matters but because we believe that clarifying the kind of discipline political science has been can offer a fresh appreciation of what political scientists possess in common despite their differences and can refocus our understanding on continuities and their implications. The essays in this book are not just markers of variety. Together, they underscore how, despite its many internal epistemological and methodological divisions, political science in the United States continues to constitute a distinct scholarly undertaking. Coming to terms with the discipline, moreover, facilitates activities that we want to encourage. These include promoting collaboration by scholars in diverse subfields, clarifying various scientific and normative debates, and expanding the reach of political science by making the discipline's historical omissions more apparent and thus more remediable. Sharing with Almond a taste for scholarly diversity, we think that the eclecticism of the discipline can most effectively produce political knowledge by becoming self-conscious about the limited but compelling sets of questions it has addressed.

In his skeptical consideration, Lindblom observes that political science "is a name given not to a field of conventional scientific inquiry but to a continuing debate" about specific subjects and claims. These, he argues, do not get resolved; "on any given big issue of fact or value, debate in political science tends to be endless rather than declining (or terminating in a finding)" (Lindblom 1997, 260–61). We agree with Lindblom that the image of a long-running debate captures well the dynamics of our discipline as a continuing process of inquiry engaged with understanding fundamental political issues. But what has this debate been about? What have been its achievements, limitations, and possibilities? These are our central questions.

For about a century, political science as an organized professional enterprise—intertwined with, but distinct from, history and the other social sciences—has set boundaries, enabled collaboration and cumulative progress, punished outliers, induced a common state of mind, and defined positions characterized by frontiers between conformity and challenge. The diverse elements in political science have formed a single broad family with recognizable features and distinguishing characteristics: a pragmatist orientation to the modern state that makes the analysis of power and choice a constitutive feature; attention to the nature and stability of liberal political regimes and, increasingly, to democracy; and a dedication to study the state and liberal democracy in ways that are transparent and systematic. Political science thus has been a discipline with recognizable content and boundaries, even if there are disputes over their exact nature. The existence of a discipline is both limiting and productive; without it we are adrift, so knowing what it consists of is a pressing matter.<sup>2</sup>

2. As Goodin and Klingeman claim, "the same received disciplinary traditions and practices which so powerfully mould and constrain us are at one and the same time

For better or worse, political science within and across its subfields has operated as an interwoven branch of knowledge. But this unity is a particular kind. Characterized by a wide variety of questions, methods, and borrowings from other disciplines, it is distinct from the crisp methodological individualism that marks postwar neoclassical economics or analytical philosophy. It is also less permissive and open than, say, the fields of English literature or anthropology in recent decades. Marked by an emphasis on liberal politics, a tension-ridden engagement with democracy, and conceptual bearings that rest on a nonmetaphysical view of the modern state, political science is recognizable as a clear-cut scholarly endeavor whose development has been shaped by coherent and delimited intellectual debates. As a discipline, political science may lack a defining paradigm, but not a defining identity. It has used its principal concepts and methodological tool kit to work on a limited number of core problems.<sup>3</sup>

But it is not mainly the enabling and confining institutional terrain of political science on which we focus. American political science has specialized in developing particular kinds of social knowledge. The modifier *American* has to be taken seriously. Clearly, biblical, as well as classical Chinese, Indian, Greek, and Roman texts, not to speak of medieval, early-modern, and modern political thought in the West, present ample evidence that methodical reasoning about political authority hardly has been limited either to the United States or produced under the auspices of the American Political Science Association. Humankind's rich lineage of political thought, however, does not constitute political science in the modern sense (even if its texts and teachings have been incorporated, albeit in

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powerfully enabling. The framework provided by the structure of a discipline's traditions both focuses research and facilitates collaboration, unintentional as well as intentional. A shared disciplinary framework makes it possible for mere journey-men to stand, productively, on the shoulders of giants. It also makes it possible for giants to build, productively, on the contributions of legions of more ordinarily gifted practitioners. . . . Discipline, academic or otherwise, is thus a classic instance of a useful self-binding mechanism. Subjecting oneself to the discipline of a discipline . . . is conducive to more and indisputably better work, both individually and collectively" (1996, 4–6).

3. By the time the *American Political Science Review* made its first appearance in 1906, the American Political Science Association, though just three years old, had secured a membership of some 400 scholars and practitioners. Ever since, virtually all practicing political scientists have been oriented by this publication and professional association, even when they disliked them. Further, the departmentalized organization of the major research universities and liberal arts colleges and a growing number of journals and research bodies, including the National Science Foundation, have encouraged the development of peer-understood criteria for making judgments about quality, authority, and prestige. As students of professions have observed, these institutions help produce a center of gravity defined by a combination of innovation and elite standard setting (Larson 1977; Friedson 1986; McDonald 1995). In political science, as in other knowledge-based professions, such arrangements never constitute a fully welcoming environment.



mixed fashion, in the discipline). The timing and character of the self-conscious attempt to define a specific, professional domain for the study of politics that took place in the United States at the turn of the last century had a formative impact on the discipline.

Bearing the marks of its origins, the discipline has been infused by prevailing assumptions about political values and about how to conceptualize and study the modern state. Most significant has been the discipline's attention to political liberalism (not in the partisan sense but in the sense of the doctrine fashioned in early modern Europe to guide relations between states and their citizens) joined, over time, by a heightened emphasis on democracy and its requisites. American political science was born in the Progressive Era as a nonpartisan, specialist profession geared to produce new knowledge in order to understand and help sustain liberal political regimes (Kloppenborg 1986), even when their democratic character was curtailed. Its most innovative features concerned the development of a realistic and empirically oriented liberal theory of the state that takes power and choice seriously.<sup>4</sup> The discipline's focus on liberalism has been most pronounced, if also most taken for granted, in its studies of the United States. But this cohering thrust to systematically understand the liberal state also has been important in political theory, which is often marked by a strong contractarian bent; in comparative political studies, where attention to the differences separating liberal, democratic regimes from other forms of rule is manifest; and although to a lesser extent, even in international relations, where concerns about how liberal, democratic regimes can thrive in an anarchic world have been salient.

The character of the founding of political science further helped shape its contours by pushing certain areas of inquiry into the margins. Demarcating itself from history, political science showed a greater concern for current events. To differentiate itself from sociology, it became relatively disinterested in the social bases of political action and inequality. In distinguishing itself from economics, it mainly left issues of political economy to other scholars, at least until recent decades.<sup>5</sup> Further, born at the heyday of

4. Ever since, American political studies have been influenced by the liberal political tradition that Louis Hartz (1955) controversially signaled as the hallmark of American political culture and development. His claim that liberalism possesses an ascendant and undisputed place in the United States has not gone unchallenged, of course (Greenstone 1993; R. H. Smith 1997). Arguably, Hartz's claim has been more on the mark for the discipline of American political science (and especially studies of American politics) than for the history of the United States as a political regime.

5. In 1940, Benjamin Lippincott opened a consideration of "the bias of American political science" this way: "Political problems, as Aristotle observed, are at bottom psychological and moral. It is equally true, however, that the political activities of men, as Aristotle also pointed out, are affected in a fundamental way, often crucially, by economic factors. Yet curiously American political scientists, so far as

segregation, political science initially treated race as mainly beyond its ken.<sup>6</sup> Later, each of these areas became contentious inside the discipline, as dissatisfied scholars sought to bring history, social analysis, political economy, and studies of race into its core. Because they have done so with at least a degree of success, many of these issues are now important elements in the discipline.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the broadly shared political tradition of political science, the scope of the discipline has been deep but restricted. Much of its effort has been to understand liberal institutionalism under democratic conditions, while comparing the U.S. experience to those of others and seeking knowledge about the liberal polity in a dangerous global environment. Thus, throughout its organized history, American political science has emphasized a liberal version of the state; that is, it has searched for the identification of rules based on civic and political rights to restrict potentially predatory state actors and to make the modern state permeable to the power and choices of members of society. Democracy, liberalism's first cousin, has been treated by comparison in a more ambivalent fashion, often with distrust by political scientists for the presence of the mass public and of groups thought to be ill informed and ill prepared for citizenship, and thus available for illiberal mobilization inside the liberal polity.<sup>8</sup>

"Liberalism," of course, is a broad term, with many meanings. From its origins in seventeenth-century England, political liberalism has entailed

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their writings are concerned, have been all but oblivious of this elementary truth" (1940, 125). The work of Charles Beard (1913) and Robert Dahl and Charles Lindbloom (1953) are notable exceptions.

6. In the first quarter-century of the *American Political Science Review*, there are three articles that might be considered exceptions to this omission (Rose 1906; Stephenson 1909; Roach 1925).

7. For an argument that they remain more to the periphery than at the heart of the discipline, see Walton, Miller, and McCormick 1995. With these emphases and limits, the discipline's virtues and defects have tended to be mirror images. Working on preferred subjects, political science has made impressive gains, especially when measured against the achievements of its first quarter-century. Its attainments based on an intensity of focus, however, coincide with the costs of a focused set of concerns.

8. This tension is a centerpiece of the scholarship of Robert Dahl, who, more than any other political scientist in the past half-century has placed democracy and its tension-ridden relationship with key features of the liberal political order at the center of his work. The development of "polyarchy" as a central concept by Dahl was geared to grapple with just this tension (see, among other works, Dahl 1956, 1961, 1982, 1989, 1997, and 1998).

The discipline's ambivalence about democracy was crystallized by the fall of Weimar and the flourishing of fascism. For a manifestation of this uncertainty and equivocation, see the discussion of "morbific politics" in the concluding chapter of Truman 1971 [1951].



a small number of core ideas: defense against arbitrary government; nonrevocable rights to free speech, association, assembly, and property for individual citizens who are the irreducible unit of the polity; toleration for diverse beliefs and practices; protections for minorities against the power of the majority; and institutions to enable actors in civil society to represent their interests inside the state. The questions of democracy have appeared as issues about membership and as concerns for the institutions that would represent the majority and constrain the executive. Who will get to participate in the liberal polity? What forms will political participation take? How will rights and duties vary by population category? What types of institutions are best for representing the preferences and interests of the public to the political leadership? What form and organization of institutions are necessary to effectively constrain political leaders so that they cannot stray too far from the interests of civil society? By establishing rules for governance, liberalism and democracy delineate a set of contested boundaries, including those that define where the state meets its citizens, where the individual meets the community, where members of the polity meet outsiders, where sovereignty meets property, and where a liberal state meets a global system of states, empires, and other forms of rule. Each of these charged borders has been subject to controversy; each has defined key subjects for analysis and debate by political scientists.

The discipline has a distinct understanding of the modern state. It has been distinguished both from the relative inattention to the state in the cognate disciplines of economics and sociology and especially from the more unitary, less concrete, and normative continental European approaches to the state, which many of the discipline's founders encountered firsthand in their studies in Germany. By contrast, American political science has pursued a quest to understand the state at a lower, more realistic, and behavioral level of abstraction.

"State" is an awkward concept for Americans, yet, much revised from its European lineage, it has fashioned one of the discipline's main conceptual tools. Its level of abstraction was brought down to make its institutions, relationships, networks, and actors identifiable for systematic studies. Political science strives "to assemble on common ground those persons whose main interests are connected to the scientific study of the organization and functions of the state," Frank Goodnow asserted in his inaugural presidential address to the American Political Science Association, and so it remains (cited in Reeves 1929, 2). For nearly a century, political scientists have been studying, debating, refining, extending, and deploying a state-focused agenda, though often without using the word itself.

From this vantage, we can see why the most familiar periodizations of the history of political science often overlook deep continuities that have made up political science during its first century as an organized discipline. We are familiar with the typical ways in which the history of political science is told. An early legal-formal constitutionally oriented

discipline was supplanted by a more scientific, behavioral impulse. In turn, behavioralism was replaced by a more heterogeneous postbehavioral period during which many approaches have emerged, some of which push toward unification of the discipline via a method-specific research program, including, most notably, one based on game theory and strategic interaction.

These histories are both too simple and too complex. Their simplicity results from a tendency to overstate the internal consistency of a given period within and across subfields. Thus, for example, even after the behavioral revolution had transformed American politics, in 1968 the founders of *Comparative Politics* lamented the relative weakness of this scientific impulse in their domain. On the other hand, these historical narratives are too complex because their periodization tends to miss the manner in which American political science has been continuous across epochs, not only with regard to its attention to a liberal political tradition and engagement with democracy but with regard to its realistic approach to the modern state, combining governance with power and choice. Underneath its flux, political science has been uncommonly continuous in its central concepts and substantive themes.

Standard disciplinary histories tend to identify the early period with studies of the state, the middle epoch with studies of power, and the latest era with studies of choice. Though each key concept has known moments when it has been featured more prominently than the others, the discipline constantly has deployed all three at the same time in order to achieve realistic and behavioral understandings of the modern state. Political science has had to come to terms with a capable U.S. national state despite a certain liberal aversion to state capacity. Recurrently, practitioners have done so by borrowing from Europe-centered state theory, which they have modified by lowering the level of abstraction, turning the big questions into mid-level researchable ones. By exploring the linkage between liberalism and democracy, moreover, political science has had to repeatedly confront issues of power. And by focusing on liberal democratic institutions, it has spotlighted the making of political choices as well as structural constraints on choosing. The repertoire of political science thus has been fixed and focused on debates about justice and membership, legitimacy and identity, the capacities of citizens and the qualities of choice, the meaning of power and functioning of state institutions, the requisites for liberal democratic states and their stability, and the relations of liberal democratic states to the international order. A century on, we continue to be challenged by the questions that most vexed our founders.



## ■ | Beginnings

The genesis of American political science combined a number of key elements. Its founding was an aspect of a wider trend in the history of social knowledge. At least since early modern Europe, scholars have attempted to produce knowledge, as opposed to mere information, by means of systematic thought and investigation organized in cooperative terms.<sup>9</sup> Later, from the 1860s to the second decade of the twentieth century, there were major advances in the West to this structured pursuit of knowledge. In this period, new forums, organized in disciplines and based on claims to rationality and science, were fashioned. The knowledge community divided into distinct specialties, eventually segmenting into the modern disciplines that we now know (Ringer 1969, 1992). At the time, a second split was under way between academic practitioners of the social sciences, located mainly in institutions of higher education, and scholars more directly concerned with the impact of knowledge on public affairs, with homes mainly in governmental bureaus or not-for-profit institutions.

As part of this reorganization of social knowledge, the American discipline of political science was founded in a double act of boundary formation. It demarcated its zone of inquiry both from those of cognate disciplines, especially history, economics, anthropology, and sociology, and from more instrumental, short-term policy studies. Though these borders were permeable to other scholarly disciplines and to policy concerns, political science came to occupy intellectual territory its members understood to be its own. The discipline's singularity and significance were recognized early in its existence.

Substantively, this arena for political inquiry shared an understanding of the modern state as a complex normative and institutional setting with other national efforts, especially German, that also were committed to study modern politics systematically. But there was a key difference. In the United States, the impulse to study the state was associated to some extent with the desire to control and contain the state by civil society. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century U.S. studies of the state went hand in hand with a concern to tame state power by liberal values and practices, including consent, toleration, representation, and individual rights. Woodrow Wilson's classic 1887 essay on public administration provides a case in point. By the late-nineteenth century, he stressed, the United States had begun to develop a robust national state. Its effectiveness re-

9. In this enlightened spirit, academies for the study of politics were founded, for example, in Paris in 1712 and in Strasbourg in 1757. In tandem with new print technologies, the creation of centralized libraries, the growth of large cities, and improvements to communication, not just the creation but the dissemination of knowledge became possible on the basis of a broadly shared standard of rationality and transparent method (Burke 2000).

quired the application of up-to-date tools of bureaucratic governance, the most-advanced examples of which could be found on Europe's continent. This importation, he cautioned, would both be incomplete and dangerous unless it were accompanied by the elaboration of ideas and institutions governing the exchanges between the state and its citizens guided by the protections promised by the liberal political tradition.

A year earlier, the statement introducing the *Political Science Quarterly*, the country's first modern political science journal, had defined "the domain of political science" similarly in terms of "the dominant position . . . the science of the state is assuming" at a moment when its scope was expanding significantly. "The conception of the state as a mere protective association against external force and internal disorder is antiquated," Munroe Smith wrote on behalf of the journal's Columbia University editors. "The state is everywhere exercising other functions than the protection of person and property and the enforcement of contract. Whether the increasing importance of the state be deplored or applauded," he concluded, "the fact remains that it is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, the central factor of social evolution" (1886, 8). Writing a half-century later, Frederick Watkins noted that "Among contemporary social scientists it is a virtually unquestioned assumption that the state forms the basic concept of political science" (1934, 1).

Wilson observed that the systematic study of the state had not yet taken root in the United States but that it had in Europe, especially in the "strong" states of France and Prussia. Yet these models, he argued, should not be imported into the United States without major modification. "We should not like to have Prussia's history for the sake of having Prussia's administrative skill; and Prussia's particular system of administration would quite suffocate us. It is better," he asserted, "to be untrained and free than to be servile and systematic." In the United States, the modern state had to balance efficient administration with popular sovereignty under a liberal constitution. He thus called for a particularly American science of politics and administration, one that filtered the knowledge and practices of other regimes "through our constitutions, only to put it over a slow fire of criticism and distil away its foreign gases" (1887, 207–19).

Characterized by a focus on formal institutions, public administration, and law, the core of the country's new political science was infused with an emphasis on the elements of political liberalism articulated by Wilson. It focused primarily on the interactions between the national state and civil society, which occurred through processes such as those governing interest representation, public opinion, and elections. The discipline also rested strongly on the premise of the modern state, which implied a global order divided into sovereign states, the separation of sovereignty from property, the demarcation of the state from civil society, a split between the ruler and the institutions of the state, and a bundle of normative justifications for





public authority. On this basis, American political science began as a quest to understand and secure liberal regimes against competitors, such as monarchies and illiberal empires.

The relationship between liberalism and democracy has been a charged feature of the discipline from its Progressive Era founding. American liberalism in this period was being tested by the process of democratization. The country's massive demographic changes, occasioned by the entry of new immigrants, the organization of labor, the assertiveness of urban political machines, and the demands of populist social movements, brought new participants into American politics. As the effective size of the polity and expectations for political participation grew, the problem of how to manage liberalism and democracy together came to the fore. These pressures for participation and patterns of mobilization produced important democratizing institutional changes, culminating in votes for women and the direct election of senators that were supported by many members of the young discipline inclined toward social reform. But others were concerned about the potentially disruptive social forces empowered by expanding democracy. About liberalism, the founders of political science were rarely ambivalent. About democracy, they were more so.<sup>10</sup>

As a science rooted in political liberalism and mindful of the demands of democracy, members of the discipline worked from its founding on a small number of recurrent issues. These included an understanding of the features that distinguish liberal democratic regimes from other forms of public authority, whether dictatorial, oligarchic or, later, totalitarian; the manner in which a state can function in a perilous international environment often hostile to liberalism and democracy; and, most prominent of all, the rules governing relations between the state and its citizens in civil society. Thus, early on, the themes of public opinion, voting, interest representation, and legislative behavior—the central institutions of a liberal democratic political order—were placed at the forefront of domestic political studies. But it took some time for this orientation to mesh with the period's scientific aspirations that political science shared with its sister disciplines and to advance the ongoing shift from theology and metaphysics to the social sciences as sources of guidance.

In 1925, the historian Harry Elmer Barnes edited a volume of assessments of the history and prospects of the social sciences. Barnes exhorted that "we must bring [them] up to the same level of development and objectivity which have at present been attained by the natural and applied

10. As a consequence, as Terence Ball (1995) has observed, American political scientists have tended to oscillate between a vision of their role, on the one side, as educating the citizenry to overcome their lack of information in order to become thoughtful political participants and, on the other side, as servants of social stability and order in the face of skepticism about the hazards of mass political participation.

sciences" (1925: xv–xvi). The book's essay on political science by Walter James Shepard of Ohio State could not have given Barnes much heart. Shepard wrote to underscore intellectual progress, noting that not only had political science separated successfully from other disciplines, it now also was internally differentiated into distinct subfields. He identified the distinctiveness of political science as a concern to develop both a science and a philosophy of the state. What was different about modern political science, he averred, was that the theoretical aspects of this quest to understand the state had become a specialized branch of the discipline. Now, speculative and deductive political theory was complemented by studies of the state that increasingly were grounded in data, history, and comparison. Treating the scientific method as entailing the systematic accumulation of fact, the elaboration of data into causal sequences, and generalization from these sequences, Shepard concluded that the discipline was making "distinct progress toward a really scientific character" (1925, 427).

Read with the testimony provided by his text, however, this seems more an act of wishful thinking than a warranted conclusion. The discipline's rules of evidence and procedures for inference still were primitive. The discipline remained suspended between its nascent rejection of history (the founding of the American Political Science Association formally represented a breakaway from the American Historical Association), ambivalence about normative theory, and its still early effort to discover a scientific character. By and large, the work accomplished in the first-quarter of the twentieth century was more descriptive; it tended to involve efforts at the semisystematic factual debunking of abstract philosophical dogma in favor of concrete, empirical descriptions of how politics actually works.

Judged retrospectively, the key element of the early years of political science was not only its nascent devotion to the scientific project but also its pragmatic view of the modern state. The discipline focused on constructing realistic portraits of how, in fact, it was linked to its own citizenry in its quest to secure liberal polities. With good reason, Almond identifies the research program at Chicago between 1920 and 1940, led by such considerable figures as Charles Merriam, Harold Gosnell, Harold Lasswell, Leonard White, and Quincy Wright, as the place where first, major advances were made in developing an empirical social science. This observation is correct; yet it misses some of the earlier pragmatic underpinnings that inspired the Chicago School.

Arthur Bentley's *The Process of Government* (1908), not cited at all in Shepard's or Almond's review essays, is exemplary of a pragmatist effort to establish the study of liberal democracy on a realistic footing; it also was a precursor to more systematic scientific ventures.<sup>11</sup> The key feature of this

11. Bentley's early work was methodological, stressing a methodological individualism he soon was to abjure (1895).



often opaque text was a reconceptualization of the state as a process of interaction between the government and its active citizens. Influenced by John Dewey, Bentley shifted our understanding of political conflict from abstract competing theories about the state, which were dominant in late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century works of political science, to clashes between actual groups with specific social interests.<sup>12</sup> Though in later work, Bentley documented vast class inequalities and their impact on political participation, here both the social structure and the economy were ignored in favor of group interactions within a system of transactions (Bentley 1969).<sup>13</sup> This "process of government," the historian of the social sciences Dorothy Ross observed, "was a liberal process" (1991, 334). By placing interest representation within a systematic framework, this practical and scientific approach to the state, focusing on institutions, power, and choice, was created to facilitate a more realistic understanding of the political order.

A significant portion of political science scholarship in the United States, ranging from neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian macroanalysis to institutional scholarship to studies of group formation and political participation, continues to approach the state by focusing on the functioning of liberal democracies, especially the one at home.<sup>14</sup> Ever since Barrington Moore published his major work (1966) on alternative regime pathways, macrohistorically oriented scholars have sought to figure out the causes of these alternative trajectories (e.g., Downing 1992; Ertman 1997; Luebbert 1991). The subjects considered in more microlevel scholarship—including public opinion, voting, political parties, and legislative behavior—likewise are concerned with requisites of liberal political orders. They too are extensions of the manner in which the state was operationalized in the early years of the discipline.

Subsequent work has had deep affinities with the themes and orientation of the discipline's founding period. Even though political scientists often stopped well short of methodical inquiry in the first phase of the discipline's history, it is a mistake to divorce as prescientific this moment from later efforts to create systematic political knowledge. Indeed, the empirical scholarship promoted in Merriam's review of "The Present State of

12. Bentley attended Dewey's University of Chicago lectures and later they were frequent correspondents (Ratner and Altman 1964).

13. To our knowledge, he never wrote about race or the exclusionary practices of Jim Crow. This silence about race and racism was quite typical even among progressive liberals.

14. There are important exceptions, of course. An older vein of work focusing on sovereignty and jurisprudence (e.g., Willoughby 1896; Merriam 1900) and more recent research at the intersection of historical sociology dealing with how modern sovereign states supplanted other forms of political rule (e.g., Tilly 1990; Spruyt 1994) consider states without placing their regime type at the center of analysis.

the Study of Politics" (1921, 21–22) and his advocacy of "a new world made over by modern science," in *New Aspects of Politics* (1925, 173–85) were intimately related to more traditional research on sovereignty and the state that had characterized his doctoral thesis on political theory since Rousseau (1900). In both, he sought to understand the requirements for a liberal political order under conditions of uncertainty, including democratic uncertainty and the insecurity generated by international relations. By turning the study of the state in an empirical direction, pre-World War II political scientists bid what they hoped would be a decisive farewell to the rarefied style of late-nineteenth-century German and French studies in favor of a focus on the two-way linkages connecting the state to its citizens.

## ■ | The Discipline's State

Despite the discipline's methodological plurality, virtually all its practitioners can recognize their participation in this particular kind of probe. Since World War II, political scientists have been concerned to understand the state as a bundle of norms, a site of power, and an ensemble of institutions. In the face of various illiberal alternatives and international dangers, they have tried to grasp the sources of liberal democratic stability and instability. Moreover, as Levi and Kahler point out in their essays that follow, this task has become ever more urgent with the globalization of politics. Within this context, political scientists also have sought to better comprehend the dynamics of political citizenship, participation, choice, and their consequences. They have done so in partially bounded subfields using a wide variety of tools. Notwithstanding, the agenda has continued to be well defined.

States are composed of bundles of norms, not just institutions or patterns of behavior. Hence it is hardly surprising that the character of liberal politics and the relationship between liberalism and democracy have long been staple questions of political theory. How such states can and should provide justice thus has been a core normative question. Justice is important in all political systems but especially in the liberal democratic state. Justice here concerns how to reconcile the individual citizen with the state and how to find guidelines for the distribution of key assets. Principles of justice mediate between the rights possessed by individuals and those held by the state. As Waldron reminds us in his contribution, norms of justice help define the public and private spheres, and they bind the state's ability to use or threaten to use force. Such norms also adjudicate value conflicts among individuals in civil society. In effect, they provide decision rules for how individuals should be treated by others and by the state. They also address issues of membership, cultural and group diversity, and distributions



not only of welfare but of cultural assets (e.g., Walzer 1983; Kymlicka 1989; for a skeptical reading, see Barry 2001). Rawls (1971) and Barry (1995), most notably, have elaborated important and controversial decision rules for justice.

Others, of course, have been suspicious of such efforts, viewing them as insufficiently attentive to often incommensurable differences in culture and identity. As Coles observes in this volume, they have worried about the manner in which such principles can perform as hegemonic covers for hierarchy, discipline, and social control (Foucault 1971, 1977). Such thought falls, at times, within the central ambit of liberal theory, as in the case of Isaiah Berlin (1990), who made incommensurability and value pluralism the bedrock of his vision of liberty. Others find footing more in republican and communitarian traditions (Sandel 1982), strong democratic theory (Barber 1988; Barber 1998, I. Shapiro 1996), or feminist thought (e.g., Pateman, 1988; I. Young 1990). As Benhabib's and Gutmann's contributions here underscore, these bodies of work suggest that a key problem for liberal democracy is how to deal with fundamental conflicts of culture and value without resort to nondemocratic procedures and complacency about issues of membership and inclusion.

Two mechanisms that some theorists have explored to move beyond singular, universalistic guidelines are discursive processes and the contraction of claims by the public sphere to a defensible, consensual minimum. The first is associated most vibrantly with Habermas's wager on communicative ethics (Habermas 1971, 1990) and elaborated by theorists of civil society who stress the power of intersubjectivity (Cohen and Arato 1992). Since reason behind a Rawlsian veil of ignorance can neither produce widely agreed deductive principles for deciding among individual and group claims nor unmask the power they may cloak, they argue, conditions must be provided for unfettered communication to allow people to mediate among themselves through discussion and argumentation and to understand the hegemonic discourses in which they take part. Such full and free discussion is necessary if liberal democracy is to be more than a cover for the reproduction of inequality. These approaches also are controversial because they raise concerns about freedom of speech and the limits on free speech in liberal societies (Holmes 1993). The second approach, associated most importantly with recent work by John Rawls (1993) to advance what he calls political liberalism, retracts the scope of the claims made by the public sphere to an arena where an overlapping consensus exists. At issue is whether liberalism in fact can accommodate deep differences, while conforming to its own most cherished principles.

In part, this is a question of power, one of the discipline's main organizing themes. Power, of course, has been much debated (e.g., Dahl 1957, 1961; Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974; Polsby 1980; Gaventa 1980; Baldwin 1989). Simplifying considerably, two conceptions have been paramount. The first and dominant position, grounded in the work of Weber

(1946) who treated power as the ability of one actor to get another to do something the latter would not otherwise do, with some persons' thus causing the action of others to conform to their preferences, was announced as a core feature of political science by Watkins (1934) and famously elaborated by his student Robert Dahl (1957). A second, more critical perspective, owing more to Marx than Weber, reminds us that liberal politics can be a cover for pervasive inequality and privilege. A focus on overt conflict and behavioral causality can neglect power as agenda setting and as shaping worldviews and preferences, even language itself (e.g., Schattschneider 1965; Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974; Gramsci 1973; Foucault 1971, 1977). Because such nonovert forms of influence often do not have behavioral correlates, they pose dilemmas for empirical research.

Two consequences follow from this second conception of power. If power is invoked through language and ideas, then a thorough understanding of the connotations and limitations built into the discourse of the time is important for understanding how power is being exerted (Connolly 1969). Interpretations of language and the meanings of action thus are fundamental to power analysis. For this reason, constructivists and other proponents of this view believe that normal political science often is superficial. Being embedded within liberal values, many political scientists, they claim, rarely question the assumptions or language used by the actors they study. Instead, such critics argue, scholars should realize that it is less important to understand what voters think or prefer than how dominant structures and agents have shaped why they do so.<sup>15</sup> Scholarship in this vein is a powerful source of critique.

Gramscian ideas of hegemony often are deployed by critical theorists and constructivists (e.g., Honig 1993; Wendt 1999; R. Cox 1983). They view elites who rule, whether capitalists, men, or members of other dominant groups, as a unitary hegemonic bloc which devises and gains from enduring structures that dominate the lives of others, even shaping their very desires. Their conception of power is both subtle and blunt—subtle in that the very structures of everyday life manipulate often unconsciously, blunt in that power tends to run mainly in one direction (for a counterflow, see Scott 1976, 1990). Since, according to them, power under conditions of hegemony cannot be grasped by direct methods of observation, special methods, including deconstruction, are deployed to discern the nature of power. Such methods often, however, raise concerns about the problems of counterfactuals and the possibility of falsification.

By contrast, the more pervasive liberal conception is less bluntly encompassing and in some respects more subtle. Here, individuals are central; structures of power ultimately are traced back to individual actions. So, too, are the formal institutions and less formal rules within which they

15. Echoing these themes, Lindblom finds that both scholars and citizens often are impaired (1990, 1997, 267–68).



connect to each other and come to decisions. Individuals, in this approach, form and know their own desires and beliefs; false consciousness is an elusive mystification. Language can be important from this standpoint, as studies of rhetoric (e.g., Riker 1986), propaganda, and the framing of issues make clear. But as it usually is not seen as a structure of power in itself, language, especially language used by analysts themselves, can be utilized as a neutral medium of communication. This conception of power also is more subtle in its acknowledgment of mutual influence. In an environment characterized by complex social and political relations, unidirectional power relations are unlikely. Models of strategic interaction stress this interaction. When individuals cannot achieve their goals without the help or at least acquiescence of others, they are mutually bound up, even if unequally. To change the behavior of others one must alter one's own, thus allowing the other to have influence, a pattern at work in the issuing of threats and promises (Schelling 1960; Jervis 1970; Baldwin 1989). This recognition has led to counterintuitive conclusions about how to exercise power, such as those informing nuclear deterrence theory where leaving oneself vulnerable to destruction can be the best way to ensure that one stays secure.

Both approaches to power are closely linked to studies of choice that confront many of the same issues. The theme of individual choice has reappeared throughout the history of the discipline, a subject expanded on for different subfields in this volume by Calvert, Weingast, and Powell. Political science finds itself sitting uneasily between economics, where choice under constraint is paramount, and sociology and anthropology, where constraint by limiting structures or culture is fundamental. The liberal democratic vision of the state intersects this tension. For individuals to matter, there must be some capacity for choice. Voting and elections are meaningful only if some options are available.

With regard to choice, political science has been characterized both by disagreement and a division of labor. Some colleagues emphasize the structural restrictions under which any choice occurs, a theme that developed for different parts of the discipline by Thelen, Pierson and Skocpol, and Orren and Skowronek in their essays that follow. "Instead of reducing behavior to individual decision-making," Charles Tilly counsels, "social scientists urgently need to study the relational constraints within which all individual action takes place" (1998a, 34). For both historical institutionalists and constructivists, these circumstances are paramount and derive from history. Mechanisms by which the past imposes itself on the present, including path dependence (Pierson 2000a), and the weight of culture and language shape and narrow choices open for individuals. Sharing much with sociologists, historians, and anthropologists, these political scientists emphasize the constraints on behavior that institutions, among other structures, impose (e.g., Katzenstein 1996a; Hall 1986; Katznelson 1981).

Another part of the discipline places these confining structures in the

background and emphasizes acts of choice. This orientation treats institutions as part of the choice set of individuals; institutions can and should be endogenized as they are not separate from individuals and their behavior. Choosing institutions goes hand in hand with making choices under particular institutional rules. Constrained choice is the only type of choice ever available, as economists are well aware. So, as Risse points out in his contribution, there is a bond between the two schools, even if it is not often recognized, just as there are potentially unrealized fruitful possibilities in encounters between the two main views of power.

The debate over choice also involves methodology. Rational-choice theory is a contested method in the discipline. It provides a core for economics, even though many economists feel "a chafing dissatisfaction with the standard neoclassical paradigm of economic analysis" (Alt, Levi, and Ostrom 1999, xv). But agreement on methods does not integrate political science as a discipline. Rather, the introduction of new methods often has been not only a source of innovation but also a cause of anxiety throughout the history of the discipline, as the essays by Cameron and Morton, and Green and Gerber in the concluding section of this book suggest. This, in fact, is one key reason why it makes little sense to periodize the history of political science by dominant scientific techniques. Indeed, as Laitin argues in his paper, in recent years there has been a growing effort to blend research methods and use their respective strengths to triangulate on the evidence.

For some colleagues, power or choice, rather than state, liberalism, or democracy, are the discipline's master concepts. They see political science as the study of "the organization of power" (Holden 2000, 3; earlier see Lasswell and Kaplan 1950) or as a set of strategic interactions producing equilibria under determinate historical conditions (e.g., Bates, Greif, Levi, Rosenthal, and Weingast 1998). But important as power and choice have been as key concepts in political analysis, they define only two of the entry points to the discipline's quest to understand politics in the modern state. The discipline's nonmetaphysical attention to the state has primarily manifested itself not with power or choice alone but with power and choice in tandem with a concern for the functioning of political institutions. The state is not studied as such but from different vantages to discern the operation of its distinct parts.

The liberal democratic state has been a recurring source of deep anxiety, a theme that Shapiro takes up in his essay on democratic theory in this volume. The fall of the Weimar Republic and, more broadly, the collapse of many other constitutional democracies with the rise of fascism and bolshevism in the interwar period alerted the discipline to the terrible consequences of unstable democracies. Later, Arrow's Impossibility Theorem (1963 [1951]), a key instance of incisive analytical work on the core problems of liberal regimes, set forth the theoretical challenge in stark terms. Instability is an immanent feature of liberal democracy. Under broad con-



ditions, majority rule leads to the cycling of coalitions and policy; only nondemocratic practices can alleviate this deep tendency, convoking a trade-off between stability and democracy.

Determining sources of instability and ungovernability in liberal democratic institutions has been a major area of research for decades. Where some see individual voters as the problem for stable democracy, others fault the mechanisms that aggregate their preferences (e.g., Eckstein 1966). A state is a composite of institutions that may not fit well together since each was designed for a distinct task or problem. For liberal democratic states, this web is even more complex since it also requires institutions to ensure accountability and enforce limits on actors. It must provide security and justice as well as representation and restraint. The basic tasks of the state as Leviathan can collide with the elementary demands of a liberal democratic polity. The historical failure of countries to follow the relatively peaceful path to democracy charted by England defines a puzzle that still animates the discipline (e.g., Bendix 1977; Almond, Flanagan, and Mundt 1973). Interestingly, recent work by Przeworski and Limongi (1993) and Barro (1997) broadly confirms, albeit with variation in emphasis, the early studies of Moore (1966) and Lipset (1959, 1994), among others, finding that democracy is premised on certain socioeconomic requisites. These claims, too, link the state to its civil society in complex ways, as Kohli elaborates in his essay here.

The functioning of state institutions has defined a major vein of research throughout the history of the discipline, as a number of the essays in this book make clear. Institutions now are understood to provide one solution to Arrow's problem. They induce policy stability but do not overcome his concern for the loss of democracy (e.g., Shepsle 1979; Austen-Smith and Banks 1999). Recent literature on institutions shows exactly how they possess nondemocratic mechanisms that can privilege certain actors and move outcomes away from the preferences of median voters (e.g., Romer and Rosenthal 1978, 1979; Baron and Ferejohn 1989a, b; Ferejohn and Shipan 1990). This new institutionalist literature reminds us that political science always has been concerned with institutions. The study of electoral rules, for example, has been a long-standing feature of the discipline. From Duverger (1959) to Rogowski (1987b) and Cox (1997), political scientists have been theorizing about the impact produced by different ways of translating votes into office holding. Greater proportionality has a variety of consequences for democracy: more parties, more fine tuned representation of interests, more coalition governments, less policy movement, and perhaps more instability. Against these must be weighed the costs and benefits of more majoritarian systems (winner take all) that allow short-term stability within governments but longer-term instability as governments and their policies change. The stable democracies of Britain and the United States for years were our only models, and many scholars accepted their lessons. But more recent research into other stable systems has shown that this in-

struction is too simple. Some forms of proportionality combined with other institutions, such as corporatism, also have been consistent with representative and stable liberal democracies (Lijphart 1968, 1977; Linz and Stepan 1978; Katzenstein 1985; Rogowski 1987b).

Party systems as institutions of liberal democracy essential for connecting voters and politicians have been another area of persistent attention, one that Fiorina addresses in his contribution here. Related to the debate over electoral rules, disputation over the functioning of two-party and multiparty systems, not to mention attention to one-party systems, is long standing, as recent retrospectives on the American Political Science Association's 1950 report "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System" and V. O. Key's landmark *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949) make evident. The happy conclusion initially drawn from the U.S. and British cases was in favor of two-party democracy. This finding was muddled by Downs's prediction (1957) that such two-party stability can be achieved only with a huge cost in terms of choice. Convergence to the median position by both parties reduces substantive choice even as it underscores liberal democracy's central principle of rule by the majority. Since Downs's seminal work, we have learned much more about party systems and their implications for the success of liberal democracy (e.g., Sartori 1976; Lijphart 1977; Powell 1982; Cox 1987; Aldrich 1995).

The executive branch of government also has been increasingly attended as it has absorbed responsibilities for more, and more complex, policymaking and policy implementation. Presidential and parliamentary (as well as mixed) systems define and determine the executive differently. In many ways the executive is a simpler branch in presidential systems; winning a national election gives the leader and his party control over the presidential system. For parliamentary systems, where the executive comes from the legislature, forming a government is a central issue. When the U.S. and British examples dominated discussion, this issue did not seem very pressing. But over time, the revival of liberal constitutional regimes, after the defeat of fascism and Nazism in Europe and, later, with the collapse of communism, raised this question anew. Early work predicting minimum winning coalitions and minimally winning connected coalitions (e.g., Riker 1962; Axelrod 1970) has grown increasingly sophisticated and empirical as scholars struggle with the failure of these predictions (Strom 1990). The game of government formation has been linked backward to parties' electoral strategies and forward to their policy preferences, improving our understanding of actual outcomes (e.g., Warwick 1994; Laver and Shepsle 1996; Baron 1991, 1993).

Legislatures also have garnered an enormous amount of fruitful attention, especially in American politics where Congress, whose powers are unusually enhanced by the country's separation of powers, arguably is the center of the Constitution (Wilson 1956 [1885]). Representation, of course, is the core concept of political liberalism; it lies at the heart of



Locke's *Second Treatise* (1980 [1689]) and is the core element of government by consent. By representing the preferences and interests of members of civil society, legislatures are the key institution for liberal democracy. A central puzzle, notwithstanding, is which of their activities—including legislation, legitimation, oversight, and constraint of the executive, as well as the representation of voters' preferences—enhance chances for the persistence and success of such polities. For an extended period, Congress provided the principal model, since other parliaments could not legislate or self-organize in the American manner (Polsby 1968).

As Gamm and Huber show in this volume, recent scholarship has reacted against this understanding, showing that legislatures, even if not American in organization and style, can influence policy and the executive through other mechanisms (e.g., Huber 1996a; Tsebelis 1994, 1995). Still, studies of Congress continue to dominate legislative studies. Recent work has reopened two areas of particular interest: the ability of the legislature to constrain the executive and the functions of committees. These contributions, too, place the preservation and enhancement of liberal democracy at their center. This normative value is enhanced when the legislature is able through anticipated reaction to constrain the executive and make better policy choices in a complex environment because of the informational role of its committees (e.g., Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Krehbiel 1991, 1998).

The attention that political scientists have paid to the state includes a long-standing concern with how different institutions interact. Indeed, strategic interaction among the institutions of democracies has been a key concern from the discipline's start; the long-standing notion of checks and balances involves such interaction. How should these relations be constructed to be consistent with liberal principles that put a premium on limiting the power of rulers? Long a key concern, the topic of balance of power between executive and legislative branches today is being examined more thoroughly than in the past. In presidential systems where the executive and legislature are independently elected, the existence and character of the game defining the relations between the two branches are most apparent. Still, such strategic interaction occurs in all liberal democratic political settings as actors within the institutions vie for influence over policy. Thus both in American and comparative politics, scholars have sought to flesh out the games that arise from this interaction. Recent models and data reveal subtle ways in which legislatures delegate to the executive yet maintain control through threats to unseat governments or revoke its delegation and, in turn, ways executives use their threats of the veto or decree power to move legislatures in their preferred direction (e.g., Shugart and Carey 1992; Huber 1996a, b; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Cameron 2000). Some work also has extended this approach to the study of judicial systems.

This literature on institutional interaction also has returned to the

key theme of gridlock that so obsessed analysts of Weimar's fall (Holborn 1982). Divided government, with the executive and median legislator in different political parties, promotes checks and balances and policy moderation but can be a recipe for policy immobility, making leaders unable to respond to a changed environment (for a skeptical view see Mayhew 1991). Moving beyond divided government, some scholars have explored the general conditions under which the strategic interaction among various institutions of democracy can lead to policy gridlock (Tsebelis 1995; Krehbiel 1998). Such policy immobility paradoxically can be a central source of democratic instability and failure. Institutions thus help solve the Arrovian problem of cycling majorities and instability in democracies but, in turn, raise serious concerns about the ability of such states to respond to changing conditions due to their status quo biases.

The question of governability under democratic conditions has been connected for decades to puzzles about the rational qualities of mass publics and their readiness for political participation. Reaching back to the work of Walter Lippmann (1922) and Lindsay Rogers (1949), one branch of research has treated the central problem of liberal regimes as residing with its citizens rather than with its rulers or rules. "Democracy is of a massive nature. Therefore it cannot function without masses," Roberto Michels (1927, 762) wrote in an early issue of the *American Political Science Review*. The beliefs, opinions, and ultimately the behavior of individual citizens either is suspect or is treated as consistent with democracy only under some conditions of political culture or civic life. The latter theme has been especially important in comparative politics, where important scholarship has focused on the correlates of democratic behavior and civic culture (Almond and Verba 1963, among others) and on the role of associations in producing the development of trust among citizens (Tocqueville 1969 [1832] to Putnam 1993a, 2000). In the American politics subfield, a robust literature on public opinion has been very important, if also subject to controversy. From Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) and Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) to Popkin (1991), Page and Shapiro (1992), and Zaller (1992), scholars have asked whether citizens have knowledgeable opinions about politics and whether these form a coherent (enough) system of beliefs either to permit democratic control of elites or informed participation in the public arena.

This search for, and these signs of, relatively knowledgeable and consistent citizens has also extended to voting, a theme Scholzman addresses in her essay in this volume. Together with public opinion, this work has broad implications for understanding the relationship between states and liberal values. Our knowledge about and methods for studying voters have developed greatly over time. This interest in public opinion, beliefs, and behavior is founded on a vision of the state where individual citizens, especially citizens as voters, provide the foundation for popular sovereignty. The possibility of choice by voters and the circumstances guiding that



choice thus are of central importance to a liberal society (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976). Our understanding of that public has expanded as it has come to include more diverse individuals, themes that Burns, and Dawson and Cohen take up here in their essays, respectively on gender and on race.

The public's interaction with the state also occurs in collective, not just individual, forms. Interest groups are an important element of liberal democracy, but they too pose vexing issues. Collective action by groups pursuing their interests often is seen as beneficial; how otherwise would the state know the concerns of its citizens or the intensity of their preferences? On the other hand, such groups pose grave challenges. The optimistic view of groups suggests that if all interests could form and press their demands, political leaders would know well the desires of the public (Truman 1971 [1951]). The literature on logrolling, however, has been less sanguine. If all groups act collectively in defense of their interests, a state might end up with policies different from those any one group desires and much worse than otherwise, as the Smoot-Hawley tariff demonstrated (Schattschneider 1935). Such pessimism appeared early in the discipline and was famously reinforced by Mancur Olson's demonstration (1965) that not all groups could or would act collectively; only certain privileged ones would. Worse yet, these likely would be groups that could reap highly concentrated benefits from their desired policies at the expense of the public interest. Democratic politics look very different in the presence of such active lobbies representing only parts of the public (Lowi 1964). Recently this debate has continued over the benefits given by the signaling and informational aspects of interest groups as compared to their corrosive impact on the representation of the public interest in policymaking (e.g., Chubb 1983; Walker 1991; Austen-Smith and Wright 1992, 1994; Kollman 1998).

If political science has been concerned intensely to understand the impact of institutional design and democratic participation on the persistence of liberal regimes, it also has had to consider international relations where the state appears as a nakedly coercive institution. A paradox is at work in the international relations subfield. The main tradition in international relations does not privilege the liberal democratic state, as the essay in this volume by Walt shows. Rather, the state often is conceived as a unitary dictator.<sup>16</sup> The realist tradition, however, has been concerned with how liberal states fare in an anarchic international system; from Morgen-

16. From one perspective, this account is consistent with key features of the history of liberal regimes that have conferred rights on members but, whether in geopolitics or in the conquest of overseas empires and their treatment of native peoples, have been prepared to act in a more severe manner.

thau (1948) to Kissinger (1957) and Waltz (1959, 1979), liberal democratic states have been viewed as dubiously able to perform the activities necessary to assure their survival in a brutal international environment. How can these states counter their enemies as effectively as illiberal regimes free from the constraints of representation and rights? In part, answers to this have focused on the role of international institutions in defusing the anarchic elements of the international system (e.g., Krasner 1983; Keohane 1984; Martin and Simmons 1998).

Both policy instability and immobility in liberal democracies have been causes for concern in understanding states' foreign policy responses. Allison's work (1971) on bureaucratic politics, for example, focused attention on the inner workings of democratic institutions, showing that competition among bureaucrats significantly affected foreign policies. Others have brought executive-legislative interaction into the picture. Trying to use models of the state from the American and comparative fields, they have shown that the strategic interaction between democratic institutions need not lead to foreign policy failure. The interaction might make foreign policy more difficult to conduct, but it might also give the democratic state an advantage in international bargaining (e.g., Fearon 1994a; Milner 1997; Milner and Rosendorff 1997; L. Martin 2000; Schultz 2001).

Most important, the literature on the democratic peace has recently had a profound impact, as Morrow argues here. Reversing the realist view of liberal states as hopeless in foreign affairs, this literature has argued that they may be far more able to conduct peaceful foreign policy and cooperative relations with other states than other regime types (e.g., Doyle 1986b; Russett 1993; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, and Smith 1999). The complex internal workings of democracies actually enable them to function better in the international environment. This optimistic view is not new (Wilson 1919), but it certainly never before has captured a dominant position in international relations.

Concern with the state's relationship to citizens in civil society and to other states is complemented, of course, by an interest in the state's relationship to the economy, a theme that Geddes's contribution addresses in relation to developing countries. Here, political science has a checkered record, both attentive and neglectful. Many scholars have taken up Marx's challenge to consider the association linking capitalism, liberalism, and democracy (Schumpeter 1942; Polanyi 1944; Hayek 1994 [1944]). Some think capitalism threatens democracy. Markets may be efficient but they also produce very divergent outcomes for different individuals and groups. Yawning inequalities of wealth and market distributions can translate directly into political power (or its absence), thus threatening the robustness and meaning of majority rule. Moreover, markets left to their own devices may produce so much insecurity that individuals can become willing to sacrifice liberal rights and democratic regimes on behalf of security and



more equal resources (e.g., Polanyi 1944; Katznelson 1996). If liberal democracy is to thrive or in some instances even survive, active state intervention to regulate markets and reshape their patterns of distribution becomes imperative. This requirement is the basis, of course, for the vast literature on modern welfare states (e.g., Esping-Andersen 1992; Flora and Heidenheimer 1981). Reciprocally, democracy also may threaten market-based economies. Demands for redistribution and rent seeking by interest groups can be particularly potent in democracies and thus erode the efficient operation of markets. The requirements for democracy and well-functioning markets, especially in a highly globalized environment, may pose even more very difficult issues (e.g., Garrett 1998b; Rodrik 1997).

Other scholars have underscored how liberal democracy and capitalism may be mutually supportive (Friedman 1963; Lindblom 1977). Liberalism, especially its impulse to secure private property rights and ground political rights in property ownership, may be the only foundation for the growth of capitalism. As Polanyi (1944), North and Weingast (1989), and others have argued, the operation of markets depends crucially on the political system—a point recognized as well in international political economy (e.g., Gilpin 1987). Economic growth is most likely to be robust where governments ensure private property rights and equalize social and private returns. Much current research shows that the rule of law is essential for economic prosperity (Barro 1997; Haldenius 1992). Capitalism thus is considered by some to be a bulwark for democracy (e.g., Hayek 1994 [1944]; Friedman 1963). Without private property and markets, citizens are left to the economic prey of the state. Without their own means of economic support, how can individuals resist the encroachments of the state, let alone control its behavior? As Lindblom (1977) points out in his study of the way the advantages of business can bias a political system, historically there have been no democracies without market-based economies, though the degree of market freedom has varied under liberal democratic auspices.

Issues of political economy thus have been important to the quest by political science to come to terms with the modern state in a realistic fashion. However, political economy has played less of a role in the history of the discipline than the other subjects surveyed here. Indeed, much of the theory and research in this area has been ceded to economists, leaving political scientists to focus rather more on the core zone of liberal politics where the state meets civil society. Currently, though, there is growing interaction between economists and political scientists who study political economy, in part as a result of a growing affinity of research methods, as the essays by Frieden and Martin, and Alt in this volume demonstrate. What political scientists bring to these collaborations is their long-standing concern with the state and problems of liberal democracy.

## State of the Discipline: An Afterword

The state of the discipline? Contested and methodologically diverse, political science nonetheless remains focused, as it has for a century, on a particular understanding of how to study the modern state and liberal democracy. Though there have been shifts, of course, in emphasis and method, attempts to periodize the discipline's history mislead if not grounded in these powerful continuities delineating the discipline. Moreover, though political science has not produced fixed findings in the strong sense of the term (Lindblom 1990), its intellectual debates have been cumulative and its disputations have grown more textured, more variegated, and in many respects, though not all, more capable over time.

The essays in this book, of course, record a discipline almost unrecognizable to its founders in method, range of inquiry, and achievement. Political theory has surmounted the descriptive history of ideas that dominated in the early-twentieth century. Comparative political studies have vastly expanded in scope beyond an institutional record of what foreign governments do. Americanists, deploying fresh systematic tools, have parsed the country's institutions and behavior with great analytical detail. Students of international relations have far more thoroughly grasped the tensions that confront liberal democracies in a dangerous and predatory world as they engage in trade, finance, diplomacy, and war.

Still, Goodnow, Beard, Bentley, Merriam, and the other creators of modern political science would know that they belong to this family of pragmatic, institutional, and realistic inquiries. They, too, wished to understand the state, and especially the liberal state, in an age of democratization and globalization, to assay liberal democracy via the study of institutions and approaches to justice, to treat as privileged the study of participation and behavior by citizens in these regimes, and to improve the tools they possessed to advance the scientific study of politics. They would not have been taken aback by the character or the content of the reviews of the discipline present in this book. As practicing political scientists, we continue to carry our history with us.

This observation is no mere antiquarianism. If we focus mainly on variety, methodological differences, or the massive changes that have characterized this history of the discipline rather than these continuities, we will fail to see both its cumulative attainments and the costs, as well as the gains, that have attended the discipline's bounded set of inquiries. If the state of the discipline is good and advancing, it also still must be judged as wanting to the extent to which key vexing questions—among others, questions of the robustness of democracy, the inclusiveness of citizenship, the powers of ascription and illiberalism, the varieties of legitimate political identities, the deep incommensurabilities of values and cultures, the dark side of human psychology and propensity for cruelty and violence, and the



illusion that all the pieces of the liberal puzzle can neatly line up together—are left unresolved.

Political science may have a particularly notable role to play in sharpening understandings of its landmark themes of state, democracy, justice, and participation at this historical moment. Writing about the character of global political life at the start of the twenty-first century, Geuss, a political theorist who has worked on both sides of the Atlantic, observes that there has been convergence on “a single ideal model” of “the democratic liberal state with a capitalist economy, and a commitment to a set of human rights for its citizens . . . with five distinct elements here—liberalism, democracy, the state, capitalist economy, the doctrine of human rights.” He notes further that “in much contemporary thinking about politics it is tacitly assumed that these five items form a more or less natural, or at any rate minimally consistent and practically coherent, set” (2001, 3). As an organized discipline, political science has been ahead of its time in that it has taken this group of traits and institutions as its domain for some eleven decades. No one who apprehends the field can confidently conclude that these dimensions form a stable constellation neatly or automatically. If the discipline is to successfully marshal its full potential, it must be done with an inquiring spirit that reckons with the relationship among these values and concepts in a diverse and increasingly insecure global environment.

## | Political Science: The State of the Discipline

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